

CONGRESSMAN BOBBY L. RUSH

Official Biography

Congressman Bobby L. Rush has spent most of his life fighting for everyday people. He believes that the constitutional promise of equality, liberty, and justice for all Americans must be upheld to make our nation strong. He has represented the First Congressional District of Illinois for almost two decades.

Rush's life story is truly an American story. He was born in Albany, Georgia on November 23, 1946. It was a time of terror and random violence against African-Americans living in the south. Eight months after Rush's birth, historians report that a white mob tied two black couples to a tree and killed them in a hail of gunfire. It happened in a rural Georgia county north of Rush's birthplace. The brutal murders, known as The Moore's Ford Bridge Case, led President Harry Truman to push for sweeping civil rights changes and the desegregation of the military. It was the last documented mass lynching in the United States. The nation was on the cusp of change.

But Rush's family could not wait so they joined the great African-American migration and moved north to Chicago. At the time, most of American society held no expectation that the son of a single mother, growing up on Chicago's west side, would someday become a powerful national and international leader. But Bobby Rush didn't know that.

His mother and teachers at Marshall High School told him that with hard work he could rise to the level of his limitless imagination. The American Civil Rights Movement, that began shortly after he was born, would reach its zenith with the passage of The Civil Rights Act of 1964, when he was 18 years old. This struggle to fulfill the constitutional promise of equality for all would define Rush and his life's work. The fight for human rights, in America and throughout the world, remains Rush's mission. Public service through elected office is one of the many paths he has chosen with that mission in mind. For the past 18 years, Rush's passion for helping people and solving their problems, has been reflected in every aspect of his work in the Congress of the United States.

Chicago and her surrounding communities are a microcosm of America. And, while large parts of his district includes communities that can boast world class health and educational institutions and a diverse array of businesses, there are others where youth unemployment and acts of violence are far too common. Rush is an honorably discharged Army veteran and an ordained minister with a Master's Degree in Theology. In addition to his congressional responsibilities, Rush is the pastor of the Beloved Community Christian Church of Chicago. Rush listens to his constituents with a pastor's ear and acts on their needs with a politician's skill.

He and his wife of 31 years, Carolyn, have a blended family with six children including a son who lost his life to gun violence in 1999.

U.S. Rep. Bobby L. Rush is a transcendent American leader who keeps his legislative and policy interests sharply focused on the needs of his constituents — especially the most vulnerable. He

believes in the redemptive power of the human spirit. He believes in human ingenuity and tenacity. He knows the power of a made up mind. As a member of Congress, Rush stands on the shoulders of a long line of patriots and public servants who have gone before him and who are ardent believers in our Constitution. His life is an example of our nation's fundamental promise and his work reflects a deep determination to bend the arc of government resources and innovation towards the needs of every American — whether they live on our nation's main streets or its side streets.

Legislative Highlights

From his very first year in office, Rush focused on issues of importance to low-income and middle-class families and communities. As a freshman in the 103rd Congress, Rush introduced bills on issues as diverse as [Conflict Resolution and Mediation](#) to [Public Pensions](#) and [Community Development](#).

Rush's track record of leadership on energy issues and his support for small business while serving as an alderman in the Chicago City Council paved the way for him to gain a seat on the powerful House Energy and Commerce Committee in his second term.

Rush's attention to detail in crafting national legislation inspired his peers to elect him Chairman of the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection during the 111th Congress. Under Rush's watch, important pieces of legislation became law including the [Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 \(P.L. 110-314\)](#). Signed into law by President George W. Bush, this statute is a landmark piece of legislation that provided an effective congressional response to an unprecedented wave of consumer product safety recalls between 2006 and 2007.

Key pieces of legislation that Rush crafted surrounding postpartum depression, women's health (Sec. 2951 and Sec. 2952 of Subtitle L), and prescription drug offsets (Sec. 7101 and Sec. 7102 of Subtitle B) were adopted in the landmark health care legislation, the [Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act \(P.L. 111-148\)](#), signed into law by President Barack Obama.

Because of Rush's leadership over the years on a range of small business issues and community-based lending, Rush was chosen to serve as a conferee as part of the final, bipartisan deliberative process that led to the passage of the [Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act \(P.L. 111-203\)](#). Rush fought hard to help ensure that low-income and middle-class consumers would never again fall prey to the ill-conceived, predatory financial practices that led to the near epic collapse of U. S. financial markets in 2008.

In 1996, Rush served as a conferee on the [Telecommunications Act of 1996](#). This was the first major overhaul of U.S. telecommunications law in almost 62 years. This law marked the first time the Internet was included in the broadcasting spectrum allotment and it paved the way for the growth of cable and Internet accessibility throughout the nation.

Rush's work with the **Lithuanian-American Bar Association (LABAS)** on behalf of his Lithuanian American constituents and his work in support of Lithuania's petition for NATO

membership led LABAS to name Rush their organization's "**Man of the Year**" at a ceremony held at the John Marshall Law School's Center for International and Comparative Studies.

In 1997, Rush sponsored legislation that added the name of the **late Air Force Major Robert H. Lawrence to the NASA Astronauts Memorial Foundation Space Mirror**. The mirror was dedicated in 1991 to honor all U.S. astronauts who lost their lives on space missions or in training missions. Lawrence, an African American test pilot who logged 2,500 flight hours, had not been honored but was actually considered to be the first African American astronaut whose work contributed to the development of the space shuttle.

During his tenure, Rush has brought more than one billion dollars to the First Congressional District. Through his determined advocacy for the district, he has obtained funding for construction of the Dan Ryan Expressway, and the recently completed Lovana S. 'Lou' Jones/Bronzeville Metra Station for which he was able to obtain a \$4.9 million federal grant that helped ensure the project's completion. Over the years he has obtained millions of dollars in grants for libraries, museums, municipalities, police departments, hospitals, schools, and programs that support the arts.

Today, Rush continues to carve an effective course of sound legislative leadership that protects consumers, supports our military personnel, creates jobs, expands businesses, and promotes America's national energy policy. As Rush looks to the future, the needs and interests of the people he serves in the 1st Congressional District of Illinois remain front and center.